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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TONKO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 27, 2010.

I hereby appoint the Honorable PAUL TONKO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 25 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 9:50 a.m.

DEFICIT REDUCTION—A RETURN TO FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable finger pointing, misdirected, I might add, by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, with respect to who is responsible for the mountain of debt weighing on our Nation. I rise to set the record straight and highlight just some of the actions we have taken to reduce the deficit and restore fiscal responsibility.

When this Congress took office in January of 2009, we inherited the worst recession since the Great Depression and a \$1.2 trillion annual deficit with red ink forecast far into the future. As my colleagues will recall, the general concern 10 years ago in the financial sector was whether the United States bond market could survive in the event that the entire national debt was retired as projected at the time. Starting in fiscal year 1998, we had three straight budget surpluses, totaling more than \$559 billion, with a projected \$5.6 trillion surplus well into the decade.

Unfortunately, we now know what happened next. The Bush administration and Republican-controlled Congresses cast aside fiscal discipline and made a number of reckless, long-term budget decisions that turned record surpluses into record deficits. They initiated two wars, enacted two long-term tax cuts, and a new, permanent entitlement program, none of which was paid for, and all of which added to the debt. These actions alone added \$6.6 trillion to the national debt and left the Federal budget fundamentally unbalanced for the foreseeable future. Tragically, but predictably, the \$5.6 trillion in projected surpluses became more than \$6 trillion in national debt.

But, Mr. Speaker, while we inherited these budget deficits, we also inherited the responsibility to do something about them. The American people don't want to see more of the same bankrupt fiscal policies of the past. They want to return to fiscal responsibility, and this Congress has taken a number of steps to do just that.

Earlier in this Congress, we adopted one of the most significant deficit reduction tools, reinstituting statutory PAYGO, or pay-as-you-go legislation. PAYGO is a simple concept: If you've got an idea, you've got to pay for it. And we know it works.

In 1990, in the face of then record deficits, Congress enacted statutory

PAYGO, which helped lead to three straight years of surpluses. Unfortunately, in 2002, President Bush and a Republican-controlled Congress failed to reenact PAYGO. The results were disastrous and predictable—an immediate return to record deficits. Our restoration of PAYGO this year is a critical step in controlling spending and reducing deficits.

Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives has made deficit reduction a priority with the passage of a number of important pieces of legislation. One of the largest drivers of the deficit has been the rising cost of health insurance premiums and health care costs. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the health insurance reform law will finally bend the cost curve and reduce the deficit by \$124 billion over the next 10 years, and \$1.2 trillion in the 10 years thereafter.

Through passage of the Student Aid and Responsibility Act, we reformed the college loan program, producing new efficiencies, expanding opportunity for millions of young people, and we reduced the deficit by \$19 billion.

We responded swiftly to a Government Accountability Office report highlighting billions of dollars of cost overruns and wasteful Pentagon spending for weapons and services. The Weapons System Acquisition Reform Act and the IMPROVE Acquisition Act passed by this Congress will crack down on more than \$300 billion in wasteful spending, further reducing the deficit, and will ensure that our defense dollars are serving the actual needs of our men and women in uniform.

The American Clean Energy and Security Act which passed this body set new standards for energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, which would reduce the deficit by \$9 billion over the next decade.

The recently passed Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act will

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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enforce greater accountability of risky bank practices and reduce the deficit by \$3.2 billion over the next 10 years.

Beyond those actions, President Obama's proposed 3-year spending freeze for non-security discretionary spending will reduce the deficit by another \$250 billion over the next decade. The recently adopted House budget for fiscal year 2011 reduces the President's request by billions of dollars. I support the President's bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform and its efforts to identify even further opportunities for additional deficit reduction.

Mr. Speaker, despite inheriting record deficits, we have taken a number of steps that will restore fiscal responsibility and reduce the deficit. Already, our actions, coupled with the improving economy, have resulted in more than \$250 billion in reduction of the debt in the current year alone.

The United States went almost 30 years between budget surpluses from 1969 to 1998. The actions of this Congress have set us on the path to ensure it doesn't take another generation.

SEEKING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE ALEX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for two reasons. The first is to thank my colleagues here in the House of Representatives, and, secondly, to ask for their continued assistance.

As many of you may know, Hurricane Alex hit south Texas the first week of July. It was followed by a subsequent tropical storm that dropped more than a foot of rain on my region, which is represented by Congressmen ORTIZ, CUELLAR and myself. Even more rain, 30 inches, fell in the mountains of Monterrey, Mexico, and over the next 2 weeks, the Rio Grande River swelled to record levels, causing flooding along the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas.

The Texas border, from Laredo to Brownsville, is home for over 2 million people. The international bridges in this region carry the bulk of U.S. land trade between the United States and Mexico. The border region is primarily protected by a Federal levee and floodway control system operated by the International Boundary and Water Commission, better known as the IBWC.

Although it is responsible for over 500 miles of levees just on the U.S. side and seven dams, for decades it received approximately \$5 million a year for maintenance of those levees. As a result, a Corps of Engineers assessment in 2005 showed that hundreds of miles of the levee system were inadequate, too low or too weak to be certified. Several of the dams were also of great concern.

When the report was published, my border colleagues and I knew we had to work hard and fast to protect the mil-

lions of people we represent. We began working with the IBWC, the Corps of Engineers and local officials to get the information we needed to make our case to Congress. We thought outside the box.

Hidalgo County, with 750,000 people, one of the fastest growing counties in the Nation, worked with IBWC and the Department of Homeland Security to develop an ingenious plan to combine the Federal effort to fix the levees with the effort to build a new border fence. The resulting border-wall concept met DHS's criteria for a fence and reinforced the IBWC levees.

The county believed so much in this project and its urgency that it raised bond money and gave \$82 million to the IBWC to expedite the repairs, even though these structures were totally a Federal responsibility. Hidalgo County is one of the poorest in the Nation and should not have had to spend their scarce resources on a Federal project. They deserve to be reimbursed.

In Washington, we met with the appropriators from both sides of the aisle to make our case. I want to particularly thank Congressman FRANK WOLF, Congressman DAVID PRICE, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, Congresswoman NITA LOWEY and Congressman DAVID OBEY for understanding the need and providing us with \$400 million over the last 4 years to make the badly needed repairs.

As a result, the river levees in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties were repaired. Dams and floodways near Presidio were repaired, although not before we suffered flooding that cost the lives of U.S. and Mexican heads of the International Boundary and Water Commission who died in a helicopter crash while surveying the damage. All along the U.S.-Mexico border, repairs have been made.

I have a few pictures that demonstrate what this meant during Hurricane Alex. Here is a map showing what we would have experienced in Hidalgo County if the levees had not been repaired. Everything in blue would have been a humongous lake of approximately 150 miles. It would have looked like New Orleans did under Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Katrina. This blue area of water would have covered most of the major population area, endangering hundreds of thousands of people and causing billions and billions of dollars worth of damage.

Despite historic levels of 20 and 30 feet over flood stage, which makes the Rio Grande cresting at 59 feet, the cars on the new Anzalduas Bridge show the daily traffic coming north from Mexico. As you can see the Anzalduas Bridge, it shows that the water all around us is holding up very well because of the wall and the strengthening of the levee system.

Look at this. Unfortunately, despite our progress and historic funding, IBWC internal floodways north of the river still have not been repaired. Levees in this area did not hold and communities have been flooded.

This picture shows a section of the Rio Grande River with no levees and the resulting flooding that occurred.

This final picture is of the Anzalduas Dam. Record river water flows forced the IBWC to divert river water into the spillway that leads to the floodway. For weeks, water releases from all of the upstream dams have been diverted into the floodway because there was too much water for the dams to hold back. The record river flows have weakened dams like Amistad and Falcon which were of concern to the Corps back in 2005. Although they held this time, they may not the next time.

In conclusion, I want to thank Congressmen ORTIZ, CUELLAR, REYES, DOGGETT, RODRIGUEZ and the other members of the Border Caucus for their help. I appreciate the assistance Chairman BARNEY FRANK and his staffer Tom Glassic provided with our flood mapping and insurance issues.

I close by saying that I want to thank all the Members of this body who responded to our pleas, and I urge them to help us finish the job and complete the system. It is much less expensive than cleaning up after a natural disaster.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 13 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Through Your Word all was created. In Your Word all can be healed and brought to the fullness of life. By Your Word we are taught the ways of justice and led to peace.

Speak, Lord, Your Word to this assembly of the 111th Congress, that this Nation may be strengthened in virtue, grow in its capacity to embrace the diversity of peoples, surround them with security and right order, and so give You glory, now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) come forward and